

R 221207Z SEP 09
FM AMEMBASSY NDJAMENA
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UNCLAS NDJAMENA 000409

STATE FOR IIP/G/AF (AMURPHY AND EYORK), IIP/T/GIC (JBOCHNER), AF/C
(GMCKEEL), AF/PDPA (TAYBAR, BWHARTON)
POSTS FOR PAOS

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [KPAO](#) [OIIP](#) [CD](#)
SUBJECT: CHAD MEDIA PROFILE

REF: NDJAMENA 0260

1. INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY

Reftel discussed in general terms problems facing the media in Chad and initiatives being taken by media organizations to improve the situation. This message establishes a baseline by which to measure, quantitatively and qualitatively, media operations in Chad as they evolve. Though the number of print and electronic media continues to grow, it should be kept in mind that the majority of Chadians, especially those living outside urban areas, continues to receive information on issues of local and national interest via interaction with traditional chiefs, religious figures and other community leaders. The next most common source for news would be radio in local languages, Arabic or French. The international news sources, such RFI, BBC, and Al Jazeera, are widely respected and listened to. Domestic media are divided into two large groups, government-controlled and independent. The latter, including print, radio and websites (Chad's only TV station is government run) are affiliated with religious organizations, political parties or politicians, humanitarian and development NGOs and community organizations. Many could be classified as supporting and being supported by those opposed to the GOC. Typically, a number of media organizations appear and disappear or operate sporadically throughout a given year. Difficulties due to censorship or self-censorship mentioned reftel are compounded by extremely trying working conditions with electricity blackouts and scarcity of newsprint and other supplies and equipment being chronic problems.

2. BACKGROUND

Chad ranks as one of the poorest countries in the world. About 10 percent of the population of 10 million lives in the capital Ndjamen. The majority of the rest are distributed in much smaller cities and rural villages, mostly in the southern half of the country. Transportation and communication infrastructure is weak over a land mass three times that of California. The exception to this is the cellular phone boom that has grown to a network covering most of the country, served by three major cellular phone operators. Lack of electricity, with only four or five cities with power plants, makes for serious development challenges, and complicates enormously the task of running radio stations and printing newspapers. Low literacy rates and a multitude of languages limit the audience for print information. Although radio is the most accessible media to the general population, no single radio station broadcasts nationwide. In terms of content, government stations are the source of record for official decisions, activities of the president and cabinet ministers and GOC projects and programs. Nevertheless, private radio stations are given greater credence by the general populace. Opposition party leaders, civil society activists and other non-governmental leaders tend to receive more coverage and airtime on private stations compared to government-owned stations

3. LOCAL MEDIA

The Ministry of Communication oversees all media activities in Chad. The High Council for Communication (HCC) created in 1993, acts as a regulatory body and interfaces with local media and the government. The number of local print and electronic media continues to grow although some fail even as new ones start up.

1A. GOVERNMENT-CONTROLLED MEDIA

The government of Chad runs two major media institutions:

- The radio-television network (known as Office National de Radio Television du Tchad) comprising a satellite TV channel and the Chadian National Radio(RNT), which has local stations in Faya, Abeche, Moundou, and Sarh and broadcasts in French and various national languages
- Chadian Press Agency (ATP)

Additionally, GOC sponsors two websites, one issuing from the President's Office and the other from that of the Prime Minister

1B. PRIVATE MEDIA

Radio Stations:

- Radio Dja FM (N'djamena; languages - French, Chadian Arabic, Sara): generally critical of government policies
- Radio FM Libert (N'djamena; languages -- French, Chadian Arabic, Sara): founded by a collectivity of human rights organizations; often critical of the government
- Radio Al Nassr (N'djamena; languages - French, Standard Arabic, Chadian Arabic, Sara): pro-government
- Radio Al Quran al Karim (N'djamena; languages - French, Standard Arabic, Chadian Arabic): owned by the High Council for Islamic Affairs
- Radio Al Bayan (N'djamena; languages - Standard Arabic, Chadian Arabic): cultural radio station broadcasting programs aimed at Muslim youth.
- Radio Voix de l'Esperance (N'djamena; languages - French, Chadian Arabic, Sara): owned by the Evangelical Church
- Radio Harmonie (N'Djamena; language -- French): cultural and music radio station, subsidized by French Cultural Center.
- Radio Arc-en-Ciel (N'djamena; languages - French, Chadian Arabic, Sara): community radio affiliated with the Catholic Church
- Radio Ngato FM (N'djamena; languages - French, Chadian Arabic, Sara): commercial radio
- Radio Terre Nouvelle (Bongor; languages - French, Chadian Arabic, Peul, Massa): member of the Catholic Church radio network
- Radio La Voix du Paysan (Doba; languages - French, Chadian Arabic, Sara): member of the Catholic Church radio network
- Radio Lotiko (Sarh; languages - French, Chadian Arabic, Nganbay): member of the Catholic Church radio network
- Radio Duji Lokar (Moundou; languages - French, Chadian Arabic, Nganbay): member of the Catholic Church radio network
- Radio Karuba (Moundou; languages - French, Chadian Arabic, Nganbay): owned by a local human rights organization
- Radio Brakoss (Moissala; languages - French, Chadian Arabic, Sara): community radio station affiliated with Bahai Faith
- Radio Djimi (Mao; languages - French, Chadian Arabic, Kanembu): community radio station
- Radio Absoun (Iriba; languages - Chadian Arabic, Sudanese Arabic, Zaghawa, Massalit, Fur): community radio aimed at Sudanese refugees and Chadians in the Chad-Sudan border region
- Radio Palmeraie (Faya; languages - French, Goran): community radio
- Radio Evangelique REDG (Pala; languages - French, Moundang and other local languages): affiliated with the Lutheran Church in Chad
- Radio Communautaire de Pala (Pala; languages - French and other local languages): community radio
- Radio Barh El-Gazal (Moussoro; languages - French, Chadian Arabic): community radio station
- Radio Al Nadja (Ati; languages - French, Chadian Arabic): owned by a local development association.
- Radio La Voix du Ouaddai (Abeche; languages - French; Chadian Arabic): community radio station sponsored by an NGO called Internews
- Radio Fada (Fada; languages - French, Goran): community radio station.

French-Language Newspapers:

- N'Djamena Bi-Hebdo: privately owned bi-weekly newspaper carrying critical analyses of government policies
- Tchad & Culture: monthly magazine; put out by a development NGO affiliated with the Catholic Church in Chad. Generally moderate but does publish articles considered to be critical of GOC; located in N'Djamena
- L'Observateur: privately owned weekly newspaper often critical of government policies; located in N'Djamena
- Le Progrès: privately owned daily usually carrying pro-government news and political positions; based in N'Djamena Comment: Le Progrès is rumored to belong to MPS, the ruling party. Two factors support the rumor: a) the current Minister of Communication, a former secretary general of the MPS, is the founder of Le Progrès; b) it has unusually good access to information from government sources. End comment.
- Da'Kouna: Bi-monthly youth magazine from N'Djamena. Embassy PD section pays for a page in each number with Washington or post-generated articles, press releases and photos
- Le Temps: privately owned N'Djamena weekly newspaper often critical of government policies. (Its Director has been jailed a number of times.)
- Notre Temps: privately owned N'Djamena weekly; started up the younger brother of the owner of Le Temps; generally highly critical of government policies. (As with Le Temps, its Director has been jailed and accused of libeling government officials. It was closed by the GOC following the insurrection in 2008 and has recently reopened.)
- Sarh Tribune: privately owned newspaper published twice a month, based in Sarh, southern Chad; often critical of government policies.
- Le Messenger: privately owned published twice a month, also based in Sarh; often critical of government policies.
- La Voix: weekly N'Djamena newspaper owned by a human rights activist; mostly critical of GOC policies

Arabic-Language Newspapers:

Even more irregular than the French newspapers, many Arabic newspapers appear only sporadically. Readership is limited and these papers are generally not relied upon by the citizenry or government officials.

- Ndjamenan Al-Djadida: independent newspaper distributed in Ndjamenan and Abeche. Critical of government policies, especially with respect to Sudan.
- Al-Adwaa: independent weekly newspaper. Critical of government policies and associated with rebel groups in the east of the country that have recently reconciled with the GOC.
- Al-Ayam: Privately owned weekly newspaper often critical of government policies. It generally focuses on religious issues. It is part of the Islamic media network in Chad, which also includes Radio Al-Bayane. It serves as a platform for young Arabic-speaking Muslims. It is distributed in N'djamena, Abeche and Moundou. Generally thought to be funded by wealthy individuals in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states.
- Al-Hadara: Independent N'Djamena newspaper run by a doctor and focusing on health and nutrition issues
- Albatha: Bilingual newspaper in N'Djamena covering general news
- Tachad Al-Youm: Independent N'Djamena newspaper
- Magazine Dar Ouaddai: Quarterly private magazine funded by the Sultan of Abeche. It focuses on the culture of the Ouaddai region. It is distributed in Ndjamenan, Abeche and Moundou and is generally supportive of GOC.

1C. MAJOR WEBSITES AND BLOGS

Apart the first two URLs listed below, most Chadian website are

owned by groups or individuals opposed to the GOC.

Websites

Prsidence du Tchad : <http://www.presidencetchad.org/>

Primature : <http://www.primature-tchad.org/>

Tchadactuel : <http://www.tchadactuel.com/>

Alwihda: <http://www.alwihdainfo.com/>

Tchadvision: <http://www.tchadvision.com/>

Tchadforum: <http://www.tchadforum.com/>

Ialtchad: <http://www.ialtchad.com/>

Alhifrig: <http://www.alhifrig.com/>

PPLD <http://www.pldtchad.org/>

Lale <http://www.lale-online.com>

Tchadanthropus <http://www.letchadanthropus.com>

Tchadforum <http://www.tchadforum.com>

Tchadonline <http://tchadonline.com>

Tchad Espoir <http://www.tchadespoir.net>

Tchad-net <http://www.tchad-net.com>

Tchad Info <http://www.tchad-info.net>

Tribunecoum <http://www.tribunecoum.com>

Yorongar <http://www.yorongar.com>

Zoom Tchad <http://www.zoomtchad.com>

TchadHanana <http://www.tchadhanana.org>

Waldari <http://www.toumai-tchadhanana.com>

Blogs

Ambenatna <http://ambenatna.over-blog.com>

Anti-Deby <http://antideby.over-blog.com>

Tchado <http://tchado.com>

Tchachadi <http://tchadchadi.com>

Makaila <http://makaila.over-blog.com>

N'djamena-matin <http://ndjamena-matin.com>

RDPL <http://rdpl.over-blog.com>

4. MEDIA PROFESSIONAL/TRAINING ORGANIZATIONS

- MAISON des Medias (Media House): newly created organization with support of German development agency DED, whose purpose is chiefly to provide training for journalists
- Union des Journalistes du Tchad (UJT): main professional organization in the country
- Union des Radios Privees du Tchad (URPT): grouping of private station owners and directors
- Association des Editeurs de la Presse Privée au Tchad (AEPT) : private sector editors group
- Syndicat des Professionnels de la Communication (SPC) : Union of Communication Professionals
- Union des Femmes Professionnelles de la Communication (UFPC) : women's professional media association
- Societe pour le Developpement des Medias en Afrique (SODEMA)
- Observatoire de la Deontologie et de l'Ethique des Medias au Tchad (ODEMET): NGO that watches over media ethics
- Groupes de Recherches et d'Echanges Technologiques (GRET) : French NGO
- Association des Techniciens de la Communication (ATC)
- Media Excel Formation (MEF): Training organization for journalists

5. CHALLENGES FACED BY THE MEDIA

- Legal issues: the most controversial development, one that has the potential to pit the government against media, concerns Ordinance 05. This law, promulgated in February 2008, outlines the GOC's responsibilities vis-à-vis the media and the media's toward the government and the public. There are a number of highly

problematic articles in the ordinance that set out penalties for such things as "provocations" aimed at "diverting" the security forces from their work, or for various types of libel (diffamation). These and other "crimes" are notable for the vagueness in which they are described in the ordinance. For example, language reflecting negatively upon the "honor" of an official can get a journalist and/or his publication a large fine and 2 years in prison.

Note: There is anecdotal evidence that while Ordinance 05 has not been widely used to overtly restrict the media, it has served to create an atmosphere of self-censorship. Some journalists and editors prefer not to test the limits of how far they can go with critical commentary. Nevertheless, at this writing, no journalists are known to be imprisoned and those who have been in the past had shorter sentences than those provided for in the ordinance. Moreover, opposition newspapers have recently been getting away with rather vitriolic criticism of GOC policies on a variety of subjects. Therefore one can say that despite the ominous Ordinance 05, there is a de facto liberal operating environment for the media. End comment.

- Electricity shortages: lack of electricity has made life enormously difficult for the media in Chad. Those institutions that cannot afford generators or the fuel to run them simply stop operations during the daily blackouts. It restricts many radio stations to two to six hours a day of broadcasting. Likewise some newspapers often must delay publication as office equipment and presses go dead.

- Lack of financial resources: The Chadian constitution stipulates that some government resources should be granted annually to support the media. Funds administered by the High Council of Communications are to be allocated to individual media institutions based on their print runs, subscription figures or listener base. There has been much controversy over the way the funds are distributed. In 2008, members of the HCC were accused of embezzlement and the former chairman of the Council is still a fugitive, wanted for theft of HCC funds. Newsprint must be imported and its cost is one of the reasons that all but the best financed newspapers are constantly on the verge of closing shop.

- Training and professionalism: Most journalists working in the media in Chad, especially the private media, have had little or no training or formal preparation. The Department of Communications at the University of N'Djamena is less than five years old, and is considered to have a weak faculty. The minority of Chadian journalists who have been trained usually traveled abroad for this training. Any specialized expertise such as in covering the environment, politics, economics, development or education is extremely rare.

16. FOREIGN SUPPORT FOR THE MEDIA

A number of foreign missions and international agencies have supported the media in Chad in recent years, chiefly through training programs. The USG funds a number of projects through development grants. These include community based radio programs focusing on women's issues or aimed at youth. There is a USAID-funded program to train community radio reporters and another to train community radio personnel in studio production techniques. The post brought American journalism trainers to Chad in 2008 and 2009 to conduct workshops for working journalists and university students. Post has also granted funds to the Union of Private Radio Stations and to the Union of Chadian Journalists to participate in workshops on environmental journalism and for student internships. Post also tries to send at least one Chadian journalist to participate in a media-related IVP each year. German aid programs have also assisted Chadian journalists form professional associations and UNESCO has supported local training programs funded through the HCC.

17. COMMENT

Despite all the negatives, one should not dismiss the modest improvement in the media environment in Chad in the past year, as noted above. The growing number of community radio stations is providing access to information to the population in their own languages and provides a medium through which citizens can share experiences and discuss issues of concern to them. The newly established "Maison de Presse" has the potential to reinvigorate organized journalists, giving them a vehicle for administering their own training programs, overseeing issues of media ethics and best practices and aiding them in presenting a united front with respect to problems with censorship and threats to press freedom. There is also cautious optimism that with the reopening of journals previously closed and release from prison of opposition editors the GOC may be developing a more mature and tolerant approach to the media. If so, this is a fragile state of affairs, whose stability likely depends on a parallel stability in the very same political and security situation that journalists seek the freedom to report upon.

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